

VZCZCXRO1422
RR RUEHHM
DE RUEHHI #0775/01 0940935
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 040935Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1371
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 0869
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4676
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6685
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0655
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5477
RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH 3538
RUEHVN/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 3783
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//FPA//
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ACHAO//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000775

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; G/TIP; INL/AAE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [PINS](#) [VM](#) [TIP](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM: HIGH-LEVEL GVN TIP REVIEW

11. (SBU) Summary: "Complicated developments" in trafficking in persons (TIP) in Vietnam (which is coded official language for a worsening of the situation) provoked a surprisingly high-level conference on TIP in Hanoi that involved two Politburo members and numerous other senior officials in a review of GVN anti-TIP activities. Adding to the issue's policy importance, TIP was included in the draft Political Report of the 10th National Communist Party Congress scheduled for April 18-25. The Prime Minister exhorted concerned agencies to take "drastic measures" to combat TIP and threatened to hold officials accountable for trafficking that occurs in their jurisdictions. Ministry of Public Security officials reported on trafficking routes and statistics and indicated that the bulk of trafficking is still from Vietnam to China, with Cambodia the second-place destination country. End Summary.

Public Commitment from the GVN

12. (SBU) On March 27, the Office of the Government (OOG) coordinated with the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) to hold a conference in Hanoi on the national anti-criminal program and the anti-TIP plan of action. The event, which showcased a general decline in crime in 2005 as it reviewed the implementation of a Government decree on combating crime in general and TIP in particular, received high-level attention and participation. Deputy Prime Ministers Pham Gia Khiem and Nguyen Tan Dung (rumored to be the next Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, respectively), Minister of Public Security Le Hong Anh and Vice Minister and Police Lieutenant General Le The Tien, together with People's Committee chairmen from the country's "hotspot" provinces, attended the conference. DPM Dung instructed those at the conference that "complicated developments" in TIP in Vietnam require an "intensified crackdown." Earlier in 2006, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai ordered that "drastic measures" be adopted to stop TIP; in the same instruction, he demanded that heads of local governments be held accountable for any trafficking problems in their areas of jurisdiction. (Note: According to the Office of the Government, this instruction was delivered in writing from the PM through the OOG to the relevant agencies, but was not recorded and registered the way a formal PM instruction or decree would be, which means that, while binding on the agencies involved, it lacks the force of law of a formal instruction or decree. End Note.)

13. (SBU) The political determination to combat TIP by the Government of Vietnam (GVN) is also reflected in the inclusion of anti-TIP language in the Communist Party of Vietnam's draft Political Report for the 10th Party Congress. According to a senior official in the Women's Union of Vietnam, this is a "big deal" because it is the first time TIP will have been named as a priority in the "supreme guiding document of the Party." Separately, MPS has been asked to establish a department on TIP prevention and control to aid the fight and help the GVN to regulate its anti-trafficking programs. This would be an upgrade from the current TIP "dedicated unit" in MPS. The Ministry of Justice has been tasked by the Prime Minister with preparing legal amendments to the penal code concerning TIP prevention and control in order to "strengthen policing activities."

Trafficking in Persons "More Rampant"

14. (SBU) Not only has "the trafficking evil" spread throughout the country, but the tactics involved in luring women and children have also become more sophisticated and difficult to detect, Le Minh Phuong, deputy chief of the Ho Chi Minh City Police's Criminal Investigation Division, reported in the press. MPS has so far identified 23 specific trafficking routes and 105 hotspots nationwide, Vice Minister Tiem reported to the conference. Hotspots include Vietnam's major cities, as well as densely populated border provinces and perennial migration source areas such as Thanh Hoa Province. Recent cases have involved women and children being trafficked to countries such as the Czech Republic, Russia, Malaysia, Thailand, Macao, Hong Kong and

HANOI 00000775 002 OF 002

South Korea, according to MPS contacts, but the largest number of victims (70 percent) is trafficked to China, according to MPS experts.

Prosecution and Protection Efforts

15. (SBU) According to MPS, Vietnam's law enforcement agencies have recorded significant results despite the increased "complexity" of the problem. Between 1998 and 2005, 4,527 women and children were trafficked, MPS stated. Out of that number, 3,862 were sent to China, and most of the rest went to Cambodia. An additional 6,418 women and children were declared missing during the same period, and may also have been trafficked. In the first quarter of 2006, 63 offenders in 48 incidents were arrested and 153 victims were rescued in 34 localities in Vietnam, the conference report stated.

16. (SBU) According to the report at the conference, receiving trafficking survivors and reintegrating them into their communities have created financial and social issues for the relevant authorities. Despite serious financial difficulties, in 2005 Vietnam received and provided reintegration support for 444 women and children, MPS reported. In the first quarter of 2006, authorities in 34 localities have accepted back home 153 victims: 109 from China, 34 from Singapore and 10 from Malaysia, according to the conference report. In Vietnam, the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) is the point of contact for reintegration support for the victims.

Comment

17. (SBU) Conferences on TIP can be a dime a dozen, but this one was different. The attendance of two Politburo members plus multiple sub-cabinet members and the PM's directive to implementing agencies to increase the attention paid to the problem made this a very important meeting. The CPV's

inclusion of TIP into its five-year strategic guidance document (the blueprint for all of Vietnam's public policies) for consideration at the 10th Party Congress is also very significant and demonstrates that combating TIP is at the top of the GVN's and CPV's priority lists. The inclusion in the draft Political Report is also vital because it ensures that the enthusiasm in combating TIP will not fade with the departure of the Prime Minister in May or June, but will live on as an element of the Party's long-term policy guidance. The Ministry of Justice's involvement indicates that Vietnam shares our concern regarding the incomplete TIP legal framework, which some of our interlocutors admit poses a significant hassle at times. End Comment.

MARINE